



NEWS RELEASE

Virginia Department of Emergency Management

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor proclaims March 15 as Tornado Preparedness Day

More than 760,000 have registered to participate in Statewide Tornado Drill

RICHMOND, VA – No part of Virginia is immune from tornadoes. They can hit at any time of the year and at any time of the day. To emphasize the necessity of preparing and practicing for tornadoes, Governor Bob McDonnell has proclaimed March 15 as Tornado Preparedness Day.

On that date, all Virginians can practice taking cover from tornadoes by participating in the annual Statewide Tornado Drill, set for 9:45 a.m. The drill is sponsored by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the National Weather Service.

To start the drill, the NWS will send a test tornado warning that will trigger a tone alert and broadcast message on NOAA Weather Radio, simulating what listeners will hear during an actual tornado warning. This will prompt radio and television stations to broadcast a tone and message.

When the test tornado warning is sounded, people should move as quickly as possible to a previously designated tornado safe area in their building. Safe areas are basements, interior rooms, bathrooms, closets or hallways on the lowest level of a building. In choosing a safe area, stay away from windows. Once in the safe area, crouch down or sit on the floor, facing down, and cover heads with hands.

To get complete instructions for conducting a tornado drill and to register, go to www.vaemergency.com. Registration is voluntary, and about 760,000 Virginians already have signed up, indicating their intention to participate in the drill.

"Everyone needs to know what to do if a tornado warning is issued for their area," said Michael Cline, state coordinator for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. "Every family, business and school should hold a tornado drill at least once a year. The more we practice, the better we can respond during an emergency. And everyone needs access to NOAA Weather Radio."

NOAA Weather Radios with SAME alerts are available at electronics and sporting goods stores, discount and department stores, and online. Some have strobe lights for the hearing impaired. They come in battery-powered models, and many also have AM/FM bands.

“NOAA Weather Radio is the fastest way to get a tornado warning,” said Bill Sammler, NWS warning coordination meteorologist. “This network of radio stations broadcasts weather data from the nearest National Weather Service office. When a tornado warning is issued, the Weather Radio sounds an alarm followed by information on where the storm is, which way it’s moving, and telling people in its path to take cover. This radio could be a lifesaver.”

During the past three years, 62 tornadoes struck the Commonwealth, injuring more than 220 citizens and causing nearly \$48 million damage to homes, businesses and other property.

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Note: See Text of Governor McDonnell’s proclamation, below.

CERTIFICATE of RECOGNITION

By virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution in the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, there is hereby officially recognized:

TORNADO PREPAREDNESS DAY

WHEREAS, tornadoes often form unexpectedly and their destructive power can cause significant property damage and loss of life wherever they touch down; and

WHEREAS, a total of sixty-two tornadoes struck the Commonwealth during the past three years, injuring more than 220 citizens and causing nearly \$48 million in damage to homes, businesses and other property; and

WHEREAS, planning and preparing for tornadoes and severe storms can often reduce the impact of these emergencies on our citizens and their property; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, local emergency management offices and the National Weather Service designate a day each year to focus Virginians’ attention on tornado safety awareness and important life-saving procedures to be used in the event of a tornado; and

WHEREAS, it is important for all Virginians to know where to seek shelter during a tornado whether at home, at work, at school or elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Emergency management encourages schools, colleges and universities, businesses and families to participate in a statewide test tornado drill to be conducted by Emergency Alert Systems and broadcast by NOAA Weather Radio on March 15, 2011, at 9:45 a.m.;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Robert F. McDonnell, do hereby recognize March 15, 2011, as **TORNADO PREPAREDNESS DAY** in our **COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**, and I call this observance to the attention of all our citizens.

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